

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01112 011437Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SSM-03 IO-13 HA-05 NEAE-00 /080 W

-----075061 011446Z /43

P R 011400Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6941

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1112

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: P I N T L E

SUBJ: RENEWAL OF ADF MANDATE IN LEBANON

1. MUHSIN SLIM, PROMINENT LOCAL LAWYER AND LEADING SHIA POLITICIAN, CALLED ON DCM FEBRUARY 28. SLIM SAID THAT HE WAS LEAVING BEIRUT NEXT DAY FOR SAUDI ARABIA AND WOULD BE SEEING PRINCE FAHD (WHOM HE CLAIMS TO HAVE MET ON SEVERAL PREVIOUS VISITS TO SAUDI ARABIA) ON MARCH 2. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD BE DISCUSSING THE LEBANESE SITUATION WITH FAHD, PARTICULARLY THE QUESTION OF THE RENEWAL OF THE MANDATE FOR THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE (ADF) IN LEBANON, WHICH EXPIRES ON APRIL 28.

2. SLIM SAID THAT USG AND SAUDI ARABIA HAD BOTH SUPPORTED SARKIS' ELECTION AS PRESIDENT OF LEBANON AND SHOULD NOW HELP HIM FIND A WAY OUT OF HIS PRESENT DIFFICULTIES. GIVEN THE PRESENT DISARRAY IN THE ARAB WORLD, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE ARAB LEAGUE TO MEET AND RENEW THE ADF MANDATE. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE PRESENCE OF THE SYRIAN TROOPS HERE BE GIVEN SOME KIND OF INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01112 011437Z

COVER. IN HIS VIEW, A SIMPLE AGREEMENT BETWEEN SYRIA AND LEBANON FOR THE SYRIAN TROOPS TO REMAIN WOULD BE "ILLEGAL" BECAUSE IT WOULD BE AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN TWO UNEQUAL PARTNERS AND WOULD LEAD TO COMPLETE SYRIAN DOMINATION OF LEBANON. SINCE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN AN ARAB LEAGUE UMBRELLA UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, SLIM BELIEVES THAT EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO OBTAIN

SOME SORT OF UN AUTHORIZATION FOR THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF SYRIAN AND OTHER FOREIGN TROOPS IN LEBANON. HE INTENDED TO PUT THIS PROPOSITION TO PRINCE FAHD AND ASKED WHAT USG REACTION WOULD BE TO SUCH A SUGGESTION.

3. DCM REPLIED THAT, SPEAKING UNOFFICIALLY, IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT USG WAS INTERESTED IN COOPERATING WITH SAUDI ARABIA IN LEBANON. IF PRINCE FAHD APPROACHED THE USG SUGGESTING CLOSER COORDINATION OF OUR POLICIES IN LEBANON, INCLUDING A POSSIBLE UN ROLE, WE WOULD CERTAINLY GIVE HIS SUGGESTIONS VERY CAREFUL AND SERIOUS STUDY. WE WOULD ALSO WISH TO CONSULT WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS ON THIS SUBJECT BEFORE ANY DECISION WAS MADE.

4. SLIM SAID HE WOULD BE BACK IN BEIRUT ON MARCH 4 OR 5 FOR ONE DAY BEFORE GOING TO PARIS (WHERE HE HAS A LAW OFFICE) UNTIL APPROXIMATELY MARCH 23. HE SAID THAT IF HIS CONVERSATION WITH FAHD PRODUCED "IMPORTANT RESULTS" HE WOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH DCM BEFORE GOING TO PARIS; OTHERWISE, HE WOULD CALL AFTER HIS RETURN TO BEIRUT ON MARCH 23.

5. COMMENT:

A. IT IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THAT ARAB LEAGUE
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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01112 011437Z

RENEWAL OF THE ADF MANDATE IS IMPOSSIBLE. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT, AMIN HAFEZ, HAS SUGGESTED THAT IF A MEETING OF THE ARAB LEAGUE MEMBERS CANNOT BE ARRANGED, THE ADF RENEWAL COULD BE APPROVED BY CORRESPONDENCE. BOUTROS MAY BE DISCUSSING THIS AND OTHER OPTIONS IN HIS MEETINGS WITH ASSAD AND KHADDAM IN DAMASCUS.

B. SLIM HAS A TENDENCY TO EXAGGERATE HIS OWN INFLUENCE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS ROLE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SAUDI POLICY IN LEBANON. (IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT HE MAY MISREPRESENT CONVERSATION DESCRIBED ABOVE IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH FAHD.) NEVERTHELESS, HE DOES HAVE GOOD CONTACTS IN THE SAUDI ESTABLISHMENT AND MAY BE ABLE TO PLAY A HELPFUL ROLE IN GETTING THE SAUDIS MORE INTERESTED IN HELPING PRESIDENT SARKIS TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THE POLITICAL QUAGMIRE IN LEBANON. WE WOULD WELCOME ANY INFORMATION EMBASSY JIDDA CAN DEVELOP ON SLIM'S CONTACTS OR ACTIVITIES IN SAUDI ARABIA.
PARKER

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NNN

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